

## Press Release

# Maine State Planning Office

### State names new land use director

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Contact: Jody Harris

Tel: 287-5424

E-mail: [jody.harris@maine.gov](mailto:jody.harris@maine.gov)

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stacy Benjamin assumes the leadership of the state's land use program at the State Planning Office today.

Ms. Benjamin, a planner with the program for the past two years, holds a master's of regional planning from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. She is a selectwoman for the Town of Searsmont where she serves as tax assessor and manages the town office staff, transfer station, and cemeteries. Prior to joining the State Planning Office, she was an environmental consultant working with the Maine Department of Transportation on wetlands mitigation and a planning assistant for the Town of Bethel.

About Ms. Benjamin's appointment, State Planning Office Director Martha Freeman said, "Maine communities and the people of Maine will benefit from having Stacy as our Land Use Program Director. She is technically proficient, but more than that, she has the personal qualities to lead the program in a time of change." The State Planning Office is altering the way it delivers land use planning services. The Office is working with local and regional interests to streamline comprehensive plan reviews, provide towns with better data, and elevate the focus on regional issues. These changes are the result of a six-month, comprehensive evaluation of the program. "Stacy's expertise and leadership will help the Office update the way we plan for and manage growth," said Freeman.

Upon her appointment, Ms. Benjamin stated, "I appreciate the opportunity to work with the land use team to implement the 2006 growth management program evaluation to improve our programs and services. Preparing Maine for the land use challenges we face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will require unprecedented cooperation and collaboration at the state, regional, and local levels. The team and I will work hard to foster these relationships and provide the tools necessary to help guide Maine toward a successful future."

The land use program at the State Planning Office administers Maine's Growth Management Act and advocates for sound land use planning. It provides grants to municipalities to develop and implement comprehensive land use plans. For each town undertaking a comprehensive plan, program staff provides general advice and assistance. With the help of other state agencies, they compile town-level economic, demographic, and land use data and review comprehensive plans to assure that they address 10 statutory goals, which encourage efficient growth and development.

Ms. Benjamin replaces Matthew Nazar who resigned in June to become the Deputy Director of Community Services for the City of Augusta.



Maine State Planning Office  
Executive Department  
38 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333  
(207) 287-6077

[www.maine.gov/spo](http://www.maine.gov/spo)